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DEFENSE CHIEF TELLS INTELLIGENCE GROUPS TO STAY 'WITHIN LAW'

Brown Says He Expects Agencies to Report Any Improprieties or Abuses 'Without Hesitation'

By ANTHONY MARRO
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 8—Secretary of Defense Harold Brown has told the members of the various military intelligence agencies that their operations should be conducted "strictly within the law" and that he expects them to report "without hesitation" any abuses, improprieties or illegalities that occur.

The order, which was contained in a memorandum obtained by The New York Times, also affirms the broad power of the recently established Inspector General for Defense Intelligence to investigate all such activities "regardless of location or security classification."

The order by the new Secretary comes at a time when both the White House and Congress, spurred by widely publicized abuses by the intelligence community, are insisting that they intend to exert stronger oversight. Mr. Brown's order appears somewhat stronger than similar actions taken in recent months by Adm. Stansfield Turner, the new Director of Central Intelligence, and Griffin B. Bell, the Attorney General.

'Mired in Nightmares'

According to one military intelligence official, the purpose of the Feb. 8 memorandum was both to give Mr. Brown's backing to the Inspector General for Defense Intelligence and to try to insure that he will not have to spend time "mired in the intelligence nightmares of past Administrations."

The memorandum, which was ad-dressed to the heads of t[...] curity Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force, said that Mr. Brown was aware of the crucial role of defense intelligence and intended to give it a high priority during his tenure.

But it also said that he would "not condone activities which violate or infringe on the constitutional rights of United States citizens," and added that he expected any such abuses to be reported immediately.

Carl Feldbaum, the former assistant Watergate special prosecutor who was named to the Defense Inspector General's post last autumn, said today that some abuses were reported to his office in the two months since Mr. Brown issued the memorandum.

Concerned Isolated Incidents

He said that they had been investigated and reported to the intelligence oversight board and that they concerned "isolated incidents of individual misjudgment, rather than bad policies or programs."

The similar actions by Admiral Turner of the C.I.A. and Attorney General Bell seek to encourage persons in their agencies to report any past or present abuses.

A spokesman for Admiral Turner said that he had not issued a specific order similar to Mr. Brown's but that he had made clear he expected any abuses to be reported.

Last week, in a news letter headed "notes from the Director" which was posted on bulletin boards at C.I.A. headquarters and cabeled to stations overseas, he said that anyone with allegations about improper conduct or management deficiencies should report them.

The statement said that if a person did not feel comfortable reporting allegations to the Director or the Inspector General, he or she should report them "directly and privately" to President Carter's intelligence oversight board.

The statement came after a veteran C.I.A. official, John Stockwell, resigned one month ago and released to the news media a copy of his letter of resignation. In his letter, Mr. Stockwell accused the agency of petty corruption and serious incompetence at its upper levels, and said that his attempts to complain privately about such matters had been ignored within the agency.

Mr. Bell, in a recent discussion with agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, urged them to inform him of exactly what sort of investigative techniques the bureau had used in the past, in order to help him determine whether break-ins and mail-openings used by bureau agents to hunt for radical fugitives had been unusual activities or a common practice.